A Michigan Adoption Day Message From Chief Justice Maura D. Corrigan

This is a wonderful day, and I feel privileged to share it with the children and their families. The court, the Family Independence Agency office, the private agencies, and the families – everyone involved -- all deserve kudos for making this the great occasion it is.

As a lawyer and a jurist, I know that the people who come to court usually don't view it as a happy occasion. Adoptions are that rare joyful event that takes place in court. We all feel happy, not only for the families, but for our society as a whole. All of us have a stake in this event. When children are raised in safe, loving homes, all of us benefit.

From the perspective of the bench, we know that children raised in stable homes are far less likely to get involved in criminal behavior. We also know that they are more likely to provide secure homes for future generations.

So there is great reason to rejoice today.

At the same time, we need to be mindful of all the other children who are waiting to be adopted. Our state has many children in foster care as a result of child protective proceedings. We have hundreds of children who right now are not in the adoption process. We need to strike down the barriers, be they unnecessary court delays, administrative expenses, or other factors that stand between children and permanent placements.

As of September 30, 2003, in Michigan, 12,701 children were temporary wards of the court as a result of child protective proceedings. As of that same date, a total of 19,490 children were in foster care. At the end of September, Michigan had 4,584 permanent state wards available for adoption; 2,833 adoptions were finalized in Fiscal Year 2002. Most state wards are in the process of being adopted, but we have over 400 children who are not.

So as we celebrate – and we should celebrate this day -- let's not forget the other children who are waiting. Let's hope that this event draws attention to them and their need for safe, loving homes.

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